01039

1963/10/28

224. Telegram From the Ambassador in Vietnam (Lodge) to the Department of State[1]

Saigon, October 28, 1963—6:57 p.m.

1. Addressees of this message are as suggested in CAS Washington [*document number not declassified*].[2]

2. At the airport 0700 Monday, leading GVN officials were gathered to say goodbye to President Diem, who was taking me off on a trip. General Don sought me out and asked me whether Conein was authorized to speak for me. I said that he was. Don then said that whatever was done must be thoroughly Vietnamese and that the U.S. should not interfere or try to stimulate a coup.

3. I said that I agreed; the U.S. wanted no satellites; we would not thwart. I asked how soon action could be expected. He said, we are not ready yet. He then added: Army has lost its drive (in French "allant"); we must win before you Americans leave. We cannot do it with this government, we must, therefore, get a government with which we can win now. I said keep me informed and let me see your plans.[3]

4. Unless you object, in the interests of maximum security, I propose to limit messages on this subject to myself and the CAS ACOS. Others will be given access on a strict need to know basis.

[1] Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL 26 S VIET. Secret; Immediate; Eyes Only. The source text is CIA Station telegram 2003 from Saigon sent to the Department of State eyes only for Rusk, Harriman, Ball, Hilsman, and Hughes. Also sent to the Department of Defense eyes only for McNamara, Gilpatric, Taylor, Krulak, and William Bundy; to the White House eyes only for McGeorge Bundy; and repeated to Honolulu eyes only for Felt and to CIA eyes only for McCone, Carter, and Helms.

[2] Not found.

[3] Don, in *Our Endless War*, p. 98, recounts this airport conversation with Lodge in almost identical terms.

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FM [redacted] SAIGON 2003/FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE 281057Z

TO SECSTATE WASH EYES ONLY FOR RUSK, HARRIMAN, BALL, HILSMAN, HUGHES OSD EYES ONLY FOR MCNAMARA, GILPATRICN TAYLOR, KRULAK, MR WM BUNDY

WHITE HOUSE/EYES ONLY MCGEORGE BUNDY

INFO [redacted] ADM FELT EYES ONLY

CIA/EYES ONLY MCCONE, CARTER, HELMS

BT

1. ADDRESSEES OF THIS MESSAGE ARE AS SUGGESTED IN CAS WASHINGTON 78517.

2. AT THE AIRPORT 0700 MONDAY, LEADING GVN OFFICIALS WERE GATHERED TO SAY GOODBYE TO PRESIDENT DIEM, WHO WAS TAKING ME OFF ON A TRIP. GENERAL DON SOUGHT ME OUT [redacted] DON THEN SAID THAT WHATEVER WAS DONE MUST BE THOROUGHLY VIETNAMESE AND THAT THE U.S. SHOULD NOT INTERFERE OR TRY TO STIMULATE A COUP.

3. I SAID THAT I AGREED; THE U.S. WANTED NO SATELLITES; WE WOULD NOT THWART. I ASKED HOW SOON ACTION COULD BE EXPECTED. HE SAID, WE ARE NOT READY YET. HE THEN ADDED: ARMY HAS LOST ITS DRIVE (IN FRENCH "ALLANT"); WE MUST WIN BEFORE YOU AMERICANS LEAVE. WE CANNOT DO IT WITH THIS GOVERNMENT, WE MUST, THEREFORE, GET A GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH WE CAN WIN NOW. I SAID KEEP ME INFORMED AND [redacted]

4. UNLESS YOU OBJECT, IN THE INTERESTS OF MAXIMUM SECURITY, I PROPOSE TO LIMIT MESSAGES ON THIS SUBJECT TO MYSELF [redacted] OTHERS WILL BE GIVEN ACCESS ON A STRICT NEED TO KNOW BASIS.

~~SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

BT

SANITIZED
NLK-85-61
BY [illegible] NARA DATE 3/88